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## **Canadians have high expectations for assessment law reform, environmental experts say**

*Canadians show support for a new law and stronger environmental safeguards*

OTTAWA – The report that the Expert Panel reviewing Canada’s environmental assessment law will release next week is critical to restoring public trust in how natural resources are developed, say environmental law experts.

The report is the result of the Expert Panel’s nationwide engagement, which gathered input from scientific and legal experts, Indigenous peoples, industry representatives and members of the public.

“This past autumn, the Expert Panel heard from Canadians at hearings across the country demanding a next-generation law to assess the effects of proposed developments such as pipelines, oil sands projects, dams and mines,” said Anna Johnston, Staff Counsel at West Coast Environmental Law.

“The recommendations of the Expert Panel – and the government’s response to those recommendations – will also be hugely important to achieving sustainability and reducing Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions,” Johnston added.

Environmental lawyers and scientists say that to work for the public and the environment, a next-generation assessment law must:

- Account for the economic, ecological, and social aspects of sustainability;
- Respect Indigenous authority and governance;
- Connect assessment, decision-making, and action by different levels of government;
- Provide for full public participation, transparency, accountability, and rights to challenge decisions in court;
- Address the causes and effects of climate change;
- Include strategic and regional assessment as fundamental components;
- Require appropriate assessment of the thousands of smaller projects currently not being studied; and
- Promote evidence-based decision-making.

“The environmental community will be judging the Expert Panel’s recommendations based on how the Panel addresses the key questions that came up time and time again during the hearings,” said Jamie Kneen of MiningWatch Canada. “These are concrete criteria that Canada’s best experts have agreed are necessary for industrial development in the 21st century.”

“Looking through the submissions the Panel received, it’s clear that our current environmental assessment law needs a complete overhaul,” said Stephen Hazell, Director of Conservation and General Counsel at Nature Canada. “This isn’t the time to make small adjustments to a deeply flawed process – we need a new law that ensures the health of Canadians and the environment, and this is our chance to get it right.”

The Expert Panel report is expected to be released to the government and the public in both official languages on March 31st. The release of the report is expected to be followed by a 30-day public comment period.

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